

Message Text

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13-10

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 STR-04 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 703

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION OECD PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, NO

SUBJ: NORWAY VIRTUALLY HALTS EKOFISK OIL PRODUCTION

1. A RECENT FIRE ON PHILLIPS SATELLITE PLATFORM ALPHA AT EKOFISK HAS CLOSED DOWN THE PLATFORM WHICH WAS PRODUCING APPROXIMATELY 80,000 TO 100,000 BARRELS OF OIL A DAY (B/D). THE SOURCE OF THE FIRS HAS BEEN TRACED TO A REPTURED TEST FLOW LINE CARRYING OIL FROM THE PLATFORM TO THE MAIN EKOFISK FACILITY. THE REPTURE WAS CAUSED BY CORROSION WHICH APPARENTLY OCCURRED NEAR SEA LEVAL WHERE PROTECTIVE CEMENT COATING ON THE LINE WAS DAMAGED, EXPOSING IT TO SALT WATER.

2. AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THIS ACCIDENT, THE TWO FLOW LINES AND THE TEST LINE FROM SATELLITE PRODUCTION PLATFORM BRAVO WERE ALSO CHECKED FOR RUST. THE CONDITION OF ONE OF THE FLOW LINES LED PHILLIPS TO CLOSE DOWN FOR FURTHER EXAMINATION, AND THE OIL DIRECTORATE, NORWAY'S TECHNICAL REGUALTORY AGENCY, DECIDED TO CLOSE THE OTHER FLOW LINE UNTIL IT TOO WAS CHECKED. BOTH LINES WERE PUT BACK

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IN PRODUCTION ON NOVEMBER7.

3. PHILLIPS, THE OIL DIRECTORATE, AND THE GON ARE WORKING TOGETHER ON THE QUESTION OF PLATFORM SAFETY, AND THERE IS STILL SOME QUESTION OF WHETHER THE RISERS WILL HAVE TO BE REPLACED ON BOTH THE FLOW LINES FROM BRAVO AND THE LINE FROM ALPHA AS WELL AS ON THE TEST LINES FROM THE PLATFORMS. THIS WOULD BE A MAJOR, TIME CONSUMING OPERATION, ESPECIALLY IN NORTH SEA WINTER WEATHER, AND SPECIAL PIPE MAY HAVE TO BE FOUND AND FABRICATED. MEANWHILE PRODUCTION FROM BRAVO IS BUILDING UP AGAIN TO ABOUT 170,000 B/D, MORE WELLS SHOULD BEGIN PRODUCING SHORTLY, AND EVEN WITHOUT ALPHA PRODUCTION FROM EKOFISH SHOULD EXCEED SHORTLY 250,000 B/D,

4. WHILE BOTH ALPHA AND BRAVO WERE OUT, PRODUCTION FROM EKOFISH--WHICH HAD BEEN RUNNING AT ABOUT 320,000 B/D, WAS REDUCED TO 50,000 B/D. ALTHOUGH THE FIRE ON ALPHA PLATFORM WAS EXTINGUISHED RAPIDLY, WATER FROM THE FIRME CONTROL SYSTEM DID SUBSTANTIAL DAMAGE TO LIVING QUARTERS AND ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS AND IT WILL BE MORE THAN A MONTH BEFORE THE WATER AND FIRE DAMAGE CAN BE REPAIRED. REPLACEMENT OF THE REPUTURED RISER MAY DELAY RESUMPTION OF PRODUCTION FROM THE PLATFORM STILL FURTHER.

5. THE INCIDENT HAS LED TO INCREASED DEMANDS FOR STRONGER CONTROLS AND TO GREATER REALIZATION OF THE RISKS AND HAZARDS OF THE NORTH SEA PRODUCTION. WHILE STRICTER CONTROLS ARE EXPECTED, THE PUBLIC IS NOW ALSO MORE AWARE THAT NORTH SEA PRODUCTION IS NOT AS EASY OR AS WELL PREDICTABLE AS NORWAY'S IMPRESSIVE ACHIEVEMENTS AND DISCOVERIES HAVE MADE IT APPEAR.
BYRNE

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